United Nations S/PV.3986

Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

3986th Meeting

Thursday, 11 March 1999, 12.35 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Qin Huasun	(China)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Cordeiro
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	France	Mr. Teixeira da Silva
	Gabon	Mr. Essonghé
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/237)

99-85179 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.35 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Amir of Bahrain

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset of the meeting, I should like, on behalf of the Security Council, to express deep sympathy to the Government and the people of Bahrain for the great loss they have suffered as a result of the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain. The long and distinguished leadership of His Highness leaves an enduring legacy of pride and honour, and of a deep commitment to the cause of peace and stability in the region. I would request the representative of Bahrain to convey to his Government and to the bereaved family our deep condolences.

I now invite members of the Council to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa.

The members of the Council observed a minute of silence.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of March, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Robert Fowler, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of February 1999. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Fowler for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

On behalf of the Council, I should also like to express deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Michel Duval, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, for his very effective conduct of the Council's business during the first week of February.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/237)

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Dabor (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, which is contained in document S/1999/237.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1999/262, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should also like to draw attention to the following other documents: S/1999/174, letter dated 16 February 1999 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning the situation in Sierra Leone addressed to the President of the Security Council; S/1999/138, letter dated 10 February 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council; S/1999/186 and S/1999/224, letters dated 10 and 22 February 1999 and 1 March 1999, respectively, from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed

to the Secretary-General; and S/1999/193 and S/1999/213, letters dated 22 and 25 February 1999, respectively, from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone, on whom I now call.

Mr. Dabor (Sierra Leone): Permit me, on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone, to thank members of the Security Council, both past and present, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the assistance and support they have been giving to the democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone, headed by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Let me also thank the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, China, the Netherlands, the Republic of Guinea, Ghana, Mali, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, other member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and others for the support they have been giving to my country.

I must acknowledge the special role that the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has played and continues to play in peacekeeping and in the maintenance of international peace and security, not only in our subregion but in Africa at large. The relative peace prevailing in Liberia today would not have been possible but for the intervention of the Government of Nigeria through the regional peacekeeping force known as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

When the coup took place in Sierra Leone on 25 May 1997, the Government of Nigeria, through ECOMOG, quickly intervened at the request of President Kabbah for assistance to bring an explosive situation under control. Apart from the human losses suffered in Sierra Leone, the Government of Nigeria has been spending over $1 million a day since 1997 on ECOMOG for the sole purpose of bringing peace to my country. This is a colossal amount. I believe that the valuable role played by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in peacekeeping in Sierra Leone and in the subregion in general should be reinforced with added financial and logistical support from the international community.

It is no news to members of this Council that the prevailing rebel war has not only destroyed the socio-economic infrastructure of my country but has resulted in a huge loss of human life and property. The country has been brought to a virtual standstill. In the process, a lot of pressure has been put on the Government to have a dialogue with the rebels. I want to put the record straight here today. Since the assumption of power in 1996 after a democratic election, the Government of President Kabbah has always been serious about bringing peace to the country. Through his efforts, the peace accord was signed between the Government and the rebels in Abidjan in November 1996. The accord reached in Conakry between the ECOWAS Committee of Five and the rebels in 1998 was supported by the President, even though most of his advisers did not agree with some aspects of the accord.

Most recently, after the rebel's invasion of the capital on 6 January 1999, he had a meeting with the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Foday Sankoh, the main purpose of which was to arrive at a ceasefire leading eventually to a resumption of talks. Foday Sankoh was permitted to travel to Conakry so that he could talk to his commanders. On reaching Conakry, he reneged on the agreement and refused to sign any ceasefire until he was released from prison. Again, in an address to the nation on 28 February 1999, President Kabbah agreed to permit Foday Sankoh to meet with his colleagues so that they could articulate their position as to how to move the peace process forward. The Government has now suggested two possible venues for that meeting: Togo or Mali. The Government cannot therefore be accused of failing to make enough serious efforts to hold a dialogue with the rebels.

On Wednesday this week, in Accra, President Kabbah told journalists that he would be willing to exercise his power of clemency to release Foday Sankoh after his appeal has been settled by the courts, in order to advance the peace process in Sierra Leone. He said, "If I have to use my clemency to release Foday Sankoh in order to bring lasting peace to my country, I will do that."

There are two forces in play today in the political arena of Sierra Leone: the supporters of democracy, namely, the people of Sierra Leone, who in 1996 elected a Government of their choice and are now refusing to be disenfranchised; and the anti-democratic forces, namely, the rebels and their collaborators, internal and external, who want to assume power by illegitimate means. The rebels feel that by killing and amputating the limbs of innocent civilians the people will succumb to their

devilish wishes. But the people have continued to resist. Even though they have destroyed and killed, the rebels have not achieved their objectives. There is no doubt that the international community will continue to support the people of Sierra Leone.

My Government believes that without good governance there will be no meaningful development.

As further evidence of the insincerity of the rebels in advancing the peace process, the RUF Commander, Sam Bockarie, yesterday told the Associated Press that he will ignore the call of the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, for a ceasefire. Instead, he has threatened to launch an all-out offensive against Government forces. He said, "We are ready to fight".

We think pressure should now be put on the rebels to be serious about talking peace. Although they are saying they want peace, they continue to kill and maim innocent civilians, and they continue to burn villages and all the cities of the country.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Before turning to my statement on the draft resolution before us, may I just say with what sadness the people and the Government of the United Kingdom heard the news of the passing of Shaikh Isa Bin Salman. He was a man who guided his people well after independence in December 1971. I believe that many may have forgotten the uncertainty with which we regarded the future of the Gulf emirates at that time. Shaikh Isa made a notable contribution to the stability and success not just of Bahrain but of the Gulf States during the 1970s and beyond. He will be very sadly missed.

I shall now turn to my statement on the draft resolution before us.

The crisis in Sierra Leone matters deeply: although it is a small country, the emergency there is complex, the humanitarian problems horrifying and the message of risk for African development generally is graphic. The gravity of this situation demands a response of appropriate magnitude from the Council, the wider United Nations system and the international community as a whole.

Against this background, the United Kingdom recognizes the important progress that has been made on the ground since the security crisis of late December. We warmly welcome the planned return of United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) to Freetown, demonstrating the stabilization of the situation there. We believe that this redeployment will help bolster confidence in Sierra Leone and send the right signals about international engagement. But it will also reinforce the United Nations efforts to promote a ceasefire and dialogue with the rebels and to monitor the fragile human rights situation.

Relative stabilization in Sierra Leone has come only after the concerted efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) since the turn of the year to push back the rebels from the Freetown peninsula after their wanton violence and destruction there. ECOMOG is the sole means of protection for ordinary people from rebel atrocities and presents the only hope in the short term of bringing peace and security to Sierra Leone. The courage, determination and sacrifice of the ECOMOG soldiers from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali deserve our praise and gratitude. ECOMOG's deployment in Sierra Leone has represented a milestone in the development of regional peacekeeping, which the Council has rightly commended.

This improvement has been heavily dependent on international support for ECOMOG. The draft resolution before us, enshrining the judgements of the Secretary-General's fifth report on UNOMSIL, urges the need for continued international financial and logistical support for ECOMOG.

A large part of the new United Kingdom assistance package of 10 million pounds, announced by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook on 2 March, will again go to ECOMOG. Our funds will be used to match new contributions from others, so we urge others to play their part. The international community cannot expect the current ECOMOG contributors to continue to bear the human and financial costs of the operation in Sierra Leone without significant levels of assistance. The Secretary-General was right to draw attention in his report to the possible consequences if ECOMOG forces were to withdraw or scale down through lack of adequate support. There is a material and collective responsibility here which the United Nations and, specifically, the Security Council, must live up to.

The stabilization of Sierra Leone also depends on continuing international pressure on those providing support to the rebels. In this regard, much of our attention has rightly focused on support coming from Liberia and through the involvement of Liberian nationals. Pressure there seems to be paying dividends, and the draft resolution recognizes certain proposals made by the Government of Liberia to address this problem. But we need to check that President Taylor's assurances will be translated into concrete action. For example, we expect the Government of Liberia to meet its commitment to arrest and prosecute any Liberian citizen found to be still engaged in the armed conflict in Sierra Leone after the 45-day amnesty that began on 19 February.

The draft resolution and the report also highlight the need to help Sierra Leone ensure its own security when ECOMOG eventually leaves. This is the only way the country can look forward to lasting peace and stability. Part of the United Kingdom funding will address this through a training programme for a new, democratically accountable and effective national army. We urge others to consider what help they too can contribute in this essential area.

While the United Kingdom has paid much attention to the urgent requirement for financial, logistical and material support to shore up security in Sierra Leone, we are conscious of the need to pursue the search for a peaceful solution of the conflict as a matter of urgency. Special Representative Okelo, to whose efforts we pay tribute, has called for a significant and forceful push towards dialogue and a settlement. He and others in the region involved in these mediation efforts have our strong support. When Foreign Secretary Cook met President Kabbah in Abuja on 9 March, he pressed him to develop dialogue with the rebels. We recognize the difficulties which this presents, but are convinced that political exchange is necessary to pave the way to a better future for Sierra Leone and its people.

Success in Sierra Leone is achievable, but it needs hard work and hard cash. Ultimately, it lies in hands of the people and Government of Sierra Leone. But it will only be possible with the continued commitment of the international community to give vigorous support, on both the security and the political tracks, to a lasting solution. I trust that the Council's unanimous support for the draft resolution before us will mark that commitment.

Mr. Fowler (Canada): I thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words you addressed to me.

We are grateful to you, Sir, for allowing the Security Council to mark its sorrow at the passing of the Amir of Bahrain, Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa. Canadians deeply regret the loss of such a visionary and effective leader, and we will miss his stable management and pervasive influence in a part of the world that has known far too much turmoil.

(*spoke in French*)

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Mr. Francis Okelo, and the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for their good work under the most trying and difficult of circumstances.

Canada fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNOMSIL's mandate be extended for a further three months, until 13 June 1999, that the number of military observers be increased from eight to fourteen, and that the Mission's human rights unit be strengthened. UNOMSIL should return to Sierra Leone to carry out its mandate as soon as the security situation permits.

Canada remains extremely concerned at the grave security and humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone. We are appalled by the unspeakable atrocities committed by rebel forces against the civilian population, especially those committed against women and children. We condemn in the strongest possible terms human rights abuses perpetrated by the rebels, including torture, amputation, rape, mutilation and the forcible recruitment of children as combatants. We call upon all parties concerned to observe international norms and standards, in particular for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and to ensure full and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to affected populations. We also call for an end to violence and for the establishment of dialogue for the restoration of lasting peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada hopes that an acceptable level of human security will soon be established in Sierra Leone so that efforts may begin to rebuild a capacity within the Government and civil society to manage conflict without recourse to violence. Canada welcomes President Kabbah's recent decision to allow the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Foday Sankoh, to

meet with rebel leaders in the hope that this will lead to negotiations between the rebels and the Government of Sierra Leone on a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

We welcome assurances that alleged human rights abuses by pro-Government forces will be properly investigated, and we call on all parties to adhere to international human rights standards. Canada supports the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to protect the legitimate, democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone, and commends the force for repelling the rebels from Freetown. We also recognize the tremendous sacrifices being made by the troop-contributing countries of ECOMOG. In this regard, and in response to the Secretary-General's appeal for support to ECOMOG, Canada recently announced a Can $1 million contribution in support of the peacekeepers and the Government of Sierra Leone in their efforts to re-establish security in that country.

We are also pleased to announce the appointment of a special envoy for Sierra Leone, Mr. David Pratt, a Member of the Canadian Parliament. Mr. Pratt's first task will be to determine what further assistance Canada might provide in support of efforts to rebuild peace and stability in Sierra Leone and otherwise to assist the people of that country.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again I convey my condolences to the delegation of Bahrain on the death of the Amir, who was a most important figure of that region.

We shall vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document S/1999/262 because it contains the elements needed to promote a solution in Sierra Leone and because it sends a substantive ethical and moral message.

We fully support all those elements: continuing and strengthening the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone; the need for logistic and financial support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG); strict compliance with the arms embargo against the rebels, and a study of measures to increase its effectiveness; and adequate protection for humanitarian personnel as they carry out their noble tasks.

Moreover, the message of the draft resolution is genuinely relevant. It expresses clear support for President Kabbah, for democratic legitimacy and for the values of freedom and tolerance. We acknowledge the value of President Kabbah's invitation to dialogue. We hope that his offer will be reciprocated in equally good faith.

Secondly, the draft resolution contains an unequivocal condemnation of the atrocities perpetrated by the rebels on the civilian population, and a commitment that these acts, which offend the shared conscience of humankind, will not go unpunished. This forceful position on the part of the Council must be heard by those who have placed themselves beyond the law.

Thirdly, there is an appeal for solidarity with the people of Sierra Leone and an expression of support for the sacrifices made by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group troops in order to restore peace in that country.

I cannot conclude without expressing the appreciation of Argentina to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Okelo, and to all those countries that are cooperating by providing human, financial and diplomatic resources to protect democracy and freedom in Sierra Leone. Argentina, as a member of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, has a direct interest in having these values prevail among its member States.

Finally, we thank the Ambassador of Sierra Leone for his statement.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): I join previous speakers, as well as yourself, Mr. President, in expressing my country's sadness at the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa, Amir of Bahrain.

The Netherlands will vote in favour of the draft resolution on Sierra Leone, which enables the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) to continue to play its key role in the peace process, in tandem with the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to restore peace and security in Sierra Leone.

The situation in that country continues to be volatile. Accordingly, a credible military presence should be maintained in order to allow the parties involved — Government and rebels alike — to use the present window of opportunity to enter into a dialogue and work towards a peaceful solution. The Netherlands welcomes the signals from both sides which seem to indicate an interest in pursuing such a dialogue. We urge the parties to enter into talks without delay.

We further wish to commend the efforts of ECOMOG, and in particular the countries that contribute to its present strength, for their perseverance in creating conditions for a peaceful settlement. It should be clear that these troop-contributing countries do not stand alone. They deserve our strong support. In the case of the Netherlands, this support has so far consisted of $4 million for the ECOMOG operations plus $2 million for humanitarian assistance.

Meanwhile, let us not lose sight of the real victims of the conflict: the thousands of innocent civilians killed, wounded or maimed for life, who deserve more than just our compassion. They are in desperate need of aid and relief. We call, therefore, upon both parties to cooperate fully with the humanitarian organizations and to allow them to reach these victims without any hindrance.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I wish at the outset to take this opportunity to express Malaysia's most profound condolences to the Government and the people of Bahrain and to its Permanent Mission to the United Nations on the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the late Amir of the State of Bahrain. The late Amir and his wise counsel will be sadly missed by many world leaders, particularly those of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. May the blessings of Allah be upon him.

In considering the situation in Sierra Leone we have before us the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, document S/1999/237, of 4 March 1999, which recommends that the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) be extended for a further period of three months, up to 13 June 1999. Given the current critical situation in Sierra Leone, and the important role of UNOMSIL, my delegation supports the proposed extension as well as the proposed increase in the number of military observers and human rights personnel attached to UNOMSIL. Malaysia welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to re-establish UNOMSIL in Freetown.

My delegation is deeply concerned at the extremely volatile and fragile situation in Sierra Leone. In this regard, we welcome President Kabbah's stated willingness to engage the rebel leaders in a proposed dialogue to be held under the framework of the 1996 Abidjan Peace Agreement. The road towards peace ultimately depends on the successful outcome of the proposed talks. As an immediate measure, the rebels must agree to a cessation of the hostilities and a recognition of the legitimacy of the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah, which is a central provision of the Abidjan Peace Agreement. It is vital to ensure that this window of opportunity for a political solution to the conflict in Sierra Leone will not be lost.

My delegation shares the sense of outrage felt by the international community in the wake of the atrocities that have been committed against the civilian population in Sierra Leone, for which the rebel forces bear the main responsibility. These heinous acts — which include arbitrary killings, mutilations and other appalling human rights abuses, some of which are perpetrated on children — must not be allowed to go on with impunity. They must be condemned in the strongest terms, as in the draft resolution. The continuation of these acts cannot conduce to a process of genuine national reconciliation, which is so essential to the ultimate solution of the conflict.

We are concerned at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country and urge that the safety of persons engaged in humanitarian work in Sierra Leone be ensured, as well as their access to all parts of the country.

My delegation is also concerned over reports of support being given to the rebel forces in Sierra Leone, including the supply of arms and the dispatch of mercenaries, which would only contribute to further aggravating and complicating the situation there. We would urge strict compliance with the provisions of existing arms embargoes imposed by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The road towards finding a political settlement and healing the wounds of this horrific war in Sierra Leone may be a long and painful one. In this regard, the dual-track approach being pursued so far — combining support for the military action of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to maintain law and order with diplomatic efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict — is the right approach, and it should be sustained and strongly supported by the international community.

My delegation wishes to pay tribute to the ECOMOG forces for their role and contributions in helping restore peace, security and stability in Sierra Leone. The courage and determination demonstrated by ECOMOG forces are highly commendable. ECOMOG

clearly deserves the continued and enhanced support of the international community, which should continue to assist ECOWAS with the necessary financial and logistical support to pay the high costs of keeping their troops in Sierra Leone. We would also urge Member States of the United Nations with the resources to do so to consider providing prompt bilateral assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in various fields, including the establishment and training of a new national army.

ECOWAS, through its peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, has amply demonstrated its commitment to the maintenance of peace and security in West Africa and is undertaking in Sierra Leone an indispensable peacekeeping role on behalf of the international community. In recognition of the important role played by ECOWAS and ECOMOG in the context of regional diplomacy, it is imperative for the international community to extend all assistance and support to the peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone.

At this critical juncture in the conflict in Sierra Leone, there is a need to ensure a continued and sustained presence of ECOMOG in that country, rather than its disengagement from the conflict on the grounds of financial constraints — which would indeed be a pity. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure the continued active involvement of ECOWAS and ECOMOG in the maintenance of peace and security and the continuing search for a political settlement of the conflict in Sierra Leone, with undiminished support from the international community.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I wish to join you, Sir, and those who spoke earlier in expressing our profound sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Bahrain on the untimely passing of His Highness the Amir of Bahrain.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the precarious situation in Sierra Leone. We welcome President Kabbah's readiness to release rebel leader Foday Sankoh to meet with other Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leaders. This gesture by President Kabbah, we hope, will be the beginning of a true dialogue.

The people of Sierra Leone had been subjected to unspeakable human rights abuses for too long and, unless reason prevails, this human tragedy is bound to continue or even escalate. The recent escalation of hostilities resulted in many disappearances, abductions, the recruitment of child soldiers and violations of human rights and humanitarian law on a great scale. What we have seen in Sierra Leone could be a dangerous precedent in which rebels can overthrow legitimate Governments in Africa. This must not be allowed to happen.

My delegation therefore hails the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and its determination and courage to fight RUF rebels and their mercenary backers. Member countries of ECOMOG have and are making human sacrifices for Sierra Leone. The least the rest of us can do is to support and sustain ECOMOG financially and logistically.

We appeal to the international community to stand by the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah. It is of the utmost importance that the international community contribute to ECOMOG's two-pronged approach of military operations to deny the rebels military victory and of encouraging dialogue to end the conflict peacefully. My delegation supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL).

Finally, the future of Sierra Leone lies in the hands of the people of Sierra Leone themselves. It demands that the rebels recognize the legitimacy of President Kabbah's Government and that they cooperate with the Government to help end human suffering. It warrants pressure by the international community on those who are supporting and supplying the rebels.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): Allow me to say first a word of condolence at the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Amir of Bahrain. Shaikh Isa Khalifa was a pillar of peace in his region and commanded wide respect internationally. He will be missed by the international community as a whole. My delegation wishes to express its sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Bahrain and to the bereaved family.

The last time the Security Council considered the situation in Sierra Leone in a formal setting was nearly three months ago, on 18 December 1998. During that meeting, the representative of Sweden, Ambassador Hans Dahlgren, briefed the Council on his visit to the region in his capacity as the Chairman of the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee. Ambassador Dahlgren's insightful presentation contained a number of sobering warnings about the increased tensions in Sierra Leone and the intensified rebel activity in the north-western part of the

country. In the following days, the prescience of these warnings was painfully corroborated as the rebels launched a series of attacks, which brought them back to the gates of Freetown.

The most recent offensive of the rebel forces has been described as one of the biggest single calamities to have befallen Sierra Leone since March 1991, when members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) entered the country for the first time from the territory of Liberia. Resorting to their trademark habit of inflicting pain and misery on defenceless civilians, the rebels have killed hundreds of people and engaged in a veritable orgy of rape and rapine. Much of the capital of Sierra Leone lies in ruins and the reconstituted Sierra Leonean police force has been literally wiped out.

The destruction and mayhem would have been even greater were it not for the valiant efforts of the forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which managed to check the rebel advance. The fact that a measure of order has now been restored to Freetown and its immediate vicinity speaks volumes about the vital importance of ECOMOG to the maintenance of peace and security in Sierra Leone. We therefore commend the ECOWAS countries for all the support they have provided to the beleaguered democratically elected Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. We would also like to express our gratitude to those States Members of the United Nations which contribute their forces, logistical support and other forms of assistance to ECOMOG.

The Security Council has always favoured a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Resolution 1132 (1997), adopted by the Security Council on 8 October 1997, specifically insists on support "for the peaceful restoration of the constitutional order" in the country. We therefore strongly support the willingness to negotiate with the rebels and commend the efforts of Special Representative Francis Okelo to facilitate such dialogue. But we also believe that, while the Government of Sierra Leone should continue to refine its policy with regard to negotiations with the rebels, it must also continue to rely on military action to maintain law and order. This dual-track approach is all the more necessary in the light of the publicly expressed determination of some rebel commanders to seize power at any cost.

Nonetheless, emphasis should be placed on a negotiated solution. Despite the fact that the rebels have already violated two peace agreements, it is important that the RUF representatives bring their grievances and their plans for the future of Sierra Leone to the negotiating table. This would also be an opportunity to listen to their justifications for mass killings, widespread mutilations and other atrocities of international notoriety against a people they apparently wish to govern.

In this connection, we strongly support the appeal of the draft resolution before us for the provision of assistance in the creation of a new Sierra Leonean army. In the years since independence, Sierra Leone has experienced a wide variety of attempts by its previous armed forces either to influence the political system or to dominate it altogether. Even the incarcerated rebel leader Foday Sankoh is a product of this culture of military praetorianism. As a corporal in the signals section of the old Sierra Leonean army, he was cashiered and jailed for seven years under suspicion of involvement in a coup plot in 1971. It would therefore be our hope that, through assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone, members of the international community could help in the construction of a new Sierra Leonean military, which would be mindful of its appropriate role in society and capable of defending the country.

At this critical juncture in the history of Sierra Leone, the support of the international community is of vital importance. The presence of United Nations personnel on the ground would go a long way towards demonstrating the continued concern of the outside world for the predicament of the people of Sierra Leone. Slovenia therefore supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) and its re-establishment in Freetown, as envisioned by the Secretary-General in his latest report.

Mr. Essonghé (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of Gabon and on my own behalf, to say what a great loss the sudden passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain, is for the States of the Arabian Gulf and for the world at large. Through his great wisdom, experience and spirit of compromise, His Highness contributed to peace in the Arabian Gulf and to the search for a lasting solution to the problem of the Middle East. We are certain that his successor, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, who has long followed his predecessor's example, will pursue the tremendous work accomplished by His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa with the same dedication and devotion. We wish him every success.

The draft resolution to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), which we will be voting on shortly, bears witness to the Security Council's solidarity with the people of Sierra Leone, who have suffered so much from the fighting and from the abuses committed by the rebels. We can only be pleased by that solidarity, which will be reflected concretely in the earliest possible re-establishment of UNOMSIL in Freetown and by the increase in the number of military observers and human rights personnel, as well as by the redeployment of the necessary support staff.

We are also encouraged by the fact that the text of the draft resolution before us takes into account the need to respect the embargo on the sale and supply of weapons to the rebels, and expresses the readiness of the Council to pursue this issue of external support for the rebels and, if necessary, to take additional measures.

It is also reassuring to note the commitment of President Kabbah to begin a constructive dialogue with the rebels with a view to achieving national reconciliation and lasting peace in the country. Likewise, the courageous measures taken by President Charles Taylor, as reflected in the statement of 19 February 1999, aimed at encouraging the return of Liberian combatants from Sierra Leone, with a promise of amnesty, offer hope for a lasting solution.

We cannot forget the role and the commendable efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) aimed at restoring peace, security and stability in Sierra Leone. We hope that effort will be given increased support by the international community.

This being said, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Cordeiro (Brazil): We join you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council in the expressions of deep sorrow over the passing of His Highness the head of State of Bahrain.

Brazil supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), as suggested by the Secretary-General. We also consider that it is necessary to restore the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone and that it may well be necessary to extend it even beyond June 1999.

UNOMSIL is the expression of the political commitment of the Council to the process of pacification and nation-building in Sierra Leone. The establishment of UNOMSIL was linked to the presence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Sierra Leone, as member States of ECOWAS asked the United Nations to support and endorse their peacekeeping role.

The grim events of January suggest that the United Nations and ECOMOG should keep a strong and effective presence in Sierra Leone in order to support the efforts conducted by the Government of President Kabbah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the ECOWAS Committee of Six on Sierra Leone. The aim of this is to promote a political agreement that will include the rebels and respect the constitutional order. The Abidjan Peace Agreement of 1996 is the basis for that.

However, the rebels have a history of repeated disrespect for agreements and an appalling record of human rights violations. Brazil joins in the condemnation of the heinous acts committed against the civilian population, children, women and those very persons entrusted with the defence of human rights in Sierra Leone. We believe that political compromise cannot offer an excuse for those who have committed such crimes.

The international community needs to increase its support to ECOWAS. This is a key element for the maintenance of order and for the protection of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone.

We pay tribute to the troop-contributing countries.

Foreign military assistance to the rebels, in violation of the Council's resolutions, is a matter of grave concern that must be pursued by the sanctions committees. The providers of weapons and ammunition share in the responsibility for the brutal events that have taken place in Sierra Leone.

It is necessary to launch the basis for the future of Sierra Leoneans. The international community, through the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system, must develop a long-term strategy for Sierra Leone that includes security, political, economic, social and humanitarian aspects, as well as support for regional actors and organizations.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Please allow me, Mr. President, to also seize the opportunity at this first formal meeting of the Council following the untimely demise of the Amir of the State of Bahrain, His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, to express my delegation's heartfelt condolences to the delegation of Bahrain, to our friend and colleague Ambassador Buallay and through him to the bereaved ruling family, the Government and the people of the friendly State of Bahrain. The irretrievable loss of such a great and wise leader will be felt not only in Bahrain and the Arab world, but also in all peace-loving countries throughout the world.

My delegation is saddened by the situation in Sierra Leone. The latest round of violence unleashed by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)/Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is unique in both the scale and the grotesque nature of the attacks on civilians. The Secretary General's report speaks for itself. With no recognizable political agenda, the rebels have been waging a war of terror against the innocent civilians for almost eight years now, and there is no end in sight to the wanton destruction of life and property perpetrated by the rebels. Not even babies are spared. The perpetrators of these persistent patterns of gross violations of human rights should be pursued and brought to justice.

The humanitarian situation is also a cause for grave concern, in particular the problem of access to those in need. In this context, we welcome the plan being finalized by the international humanitarian community and the Government of Sierra Leone. We equally urge the rebels to respect human rights and international humanitarian law and to ensure unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to the needy.

However, according to the Secretary General's Special Representative, Mr. Okelo, there have since been some significant improvements in the military and security situation. This relative calm could not have prevailed without the enormous sacrifices made by the forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is also true that without the timely assistance of friendly Governments, the marked improvements in the security situation would not have been possible.

While we welcome the recent reinforcements from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, we still believe that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) needs to be further strengthened in terms of logistics and material support. My delegation is therefore grateful to the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands and Argentina for their continued support. We appeal to others to emulate these generous gestures, which constitute an ample demonstration of support for, and solidarity with, the people of Sierra Leone.

This is all the more necessary in view of the fact that President Kabbah's Government has, despite all the odds, revived its programme of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration. With the dual-track approach still a viable option, renewed diplomatic initiatives on the basis of the Abidjan peace accords could very well bear fruit. In fact, the proposed special ECOWAS Summit would create another opportunity to bring everybody on board, putting the emphasis again on wider regional involvement in the quest for a lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

As the situation in Sierra Leone still merits international attention, my delegation welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to re-establish UNOMSIL in Freetown as soon as possible. We support an increase in the current number of military observers and human rights personnel. We strongly believe that the continued presence of the United Nations on the ground is necessary. In this regard, my delegation supports the extension of the mandate of UNOMSIL and will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): I would like to quote a statement that President Clinton made on 6 March:

> "I would like to express my deep sadness at the news that Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa of Bahrain has passed away. The prayers and condolences of all Americans go out to the royal family and the people of Bahrain. The Amir was a good friend of the American people and a good friend of peace. He shared our desire to see a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. I take heart from the personal commitment to forwarding the cause of peace the Amir expressed during his recent June visit to the United States. The Amir shared his heartfelt hope to see peace come to his region in eloquent and passionate words."

I had the official as well as personal pleasure of first meeting Shaikh Isa in 1975, when I had the good fortune to be posted as a junior officer at the American Embassy in Bahrain, and I can attest that Shaikh Isa was both a wise and a very humorous ruler. He was accessible to his people — in fact, he had an open-door policy which

encouraged any Bahraini citizen to meet personally with him to express political or economic views or to seek assistance in solving problems, and he always helped.

Shaikh Isa also found time to meet even with a very junior diplomat to give him much-needed historical, political and social background on the Gulf region and the Middle East in general. He will indeed be sorely missed.

We meet today to vote on a draft resolution to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). We take such action against the backdrop of the terrible human tragedy and untold suffering being endured by the people of Sierra Leone.

The American Government and the American people have viewed the unfolding crisis in Sierra Leone with shock and dismay. Human rights abuses and atrocities on the scale seen in Sierra Leone are appalling and unacceptable. Such crimes against civilians are an affront to Africa and to the international community. The authors of these crimes against civilians must be brought to justice. We all must intensify our efforts to bring an end to this terrible conflict.

The Security Council and the international community must continue to take concrete and practical steps to support the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah. The international community must also remain vigilant to ensure that existing sanctions on weapons transfers are respected. States bordering Sierra Leone have particular responsibilities in this regard as well as in preventing their nationals from further intensifying the fighting.

Now more than ever, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) needs our support. The United States has contributed $9 million to provide logistical support to ECOMOG, and we are seeking to do more. The United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and other Member States have also contributed to helping ECOMOG. We commend in particular the United Kingdom for its leadership in contributing an additional 10 million pounds sterling to assist ECOMOG, and we call on other donors to provide matching funds. Now is the time for current and prospective donors to consider contributing to ECOMOG, either through the United Nations Trust Fund or bilaterally.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative, Francis Okelo, has worked tirelessly to promote a peaceful resolution to this conflict. We support his efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table. We regret that the fighting in Sierra Leone has prevented UNOMSIL from carrying out its full mandate. We hope that the slowly improving situation will permit UNOMSIL personnel to rapidly resume their duties.

ECOMOG's gallant efforts have restored a semblance of order and security to Freetown following the recent rebel offensive. The international community owes a great debt of gratitude to those troop-contributing nations, including Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, which have provided forces to promote peace and restore stability in Sierra Leone. In particular, we commend Nigeria, which has carried a disproportionate share of the burden in defending the democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone. We look to ECOMOG to stay the course as Sierra Leone works towards the settlement of the conflict. We will continue to support Sierra Leone and the Secretary-General's Special Representative as they strive to bring about a lasting and durable peace.

The people of Sierra Leone desperately need our assistance and our support. We must ensure that their future will be one of hope, not further suffering.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, allow me, Mr. President, to express to you and to the other members of the Security Council our deepest gratitude and appreciation for the heartfelt condolences and sympathy extended to us in our loss — a loss not only for Bahrain but for all the Arab and Islamic nations — of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, may he rest in peace. We pray to God Almighty to give us strength and comfort in our loss and pray also that the deceased will be accepted into God's compassionate embrace.

Under his rule, Bahrain moved into an age of modernization, but, according to his wishes, never at the expense of our social mores and traditions. He thus maintained a wise balance, preserving the country's characteristics while keeping up with the pace of modernization.

Despite the improvement in the security situation in Sierra Leone, the country continues to face difficult and complex challenges. Many threats lie ahead, and therefore the international community must continue to provide logistical support to the group of military observers.

In this context, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the donor countries, especially the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada, for the assistance they have provided, and continue to provide, to the military observers. My delegation wishes to express its support for all the efforts being made, in particular by member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict and achieve security and stability in Sierra Leone.

We also attach great importance to the role of the United Nations in this respect, particularly in terms of humanitarian emergency assistance, and support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. We will thus vote in favour of the draft resolution that is before the Council today.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

The Government and people and China express their profound condolences on the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain. His Highness made a significant contribution to peace and development in Bahrain and his region as well as to the friendly relations between China and Bahrain. I should like to request the representative of Bahrain to convey our heartfelt sympathy to the family of His Highness.

We are pleased to see that the situation in Sierra Leone is finally improving, thanks to the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and, in particular, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The Chinese Government firmly supports the elected Government of Sierra Leone and appreciates the dual track policy pursued by President Kabbah and his determination to achieve national reconciliation through dialogue. We urge the rebels to recognize unconditionally the legitimate Government, headed by President Kabbah, put an end to the atrocities against civilians, lay down their arms immediately and take part in a dialogue with the Government in good faith so as to avoid further bloodshed and conflict.

We call upon the countries concerned to abide strictly by international law and to genuinely respect the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Sierra Leone. China is gravely concerned about outside support for and participation in the rebel forces. We should like to reiterate the importance of paragraphs 7 and 8 of the draft resolution before us and emphasize our support for the necessary measures to be taken by the Security Council in this regard. The United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) is a concrete embodiment of the Security Council's support for the Government and the people of Sierra Leone. We support the extension of the mandate of UNOMSIL.

In response to the appeal by Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, China has provided emergency assistance to the people of Sierra Leone and the ECOWAS members concerned, in the form of, respectively, material for civilian use and *matériel*. We will continue to provide help as far as we are able, through bilateral channels.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1999/262) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1231 (1999).

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.